

# The NIH History Blog

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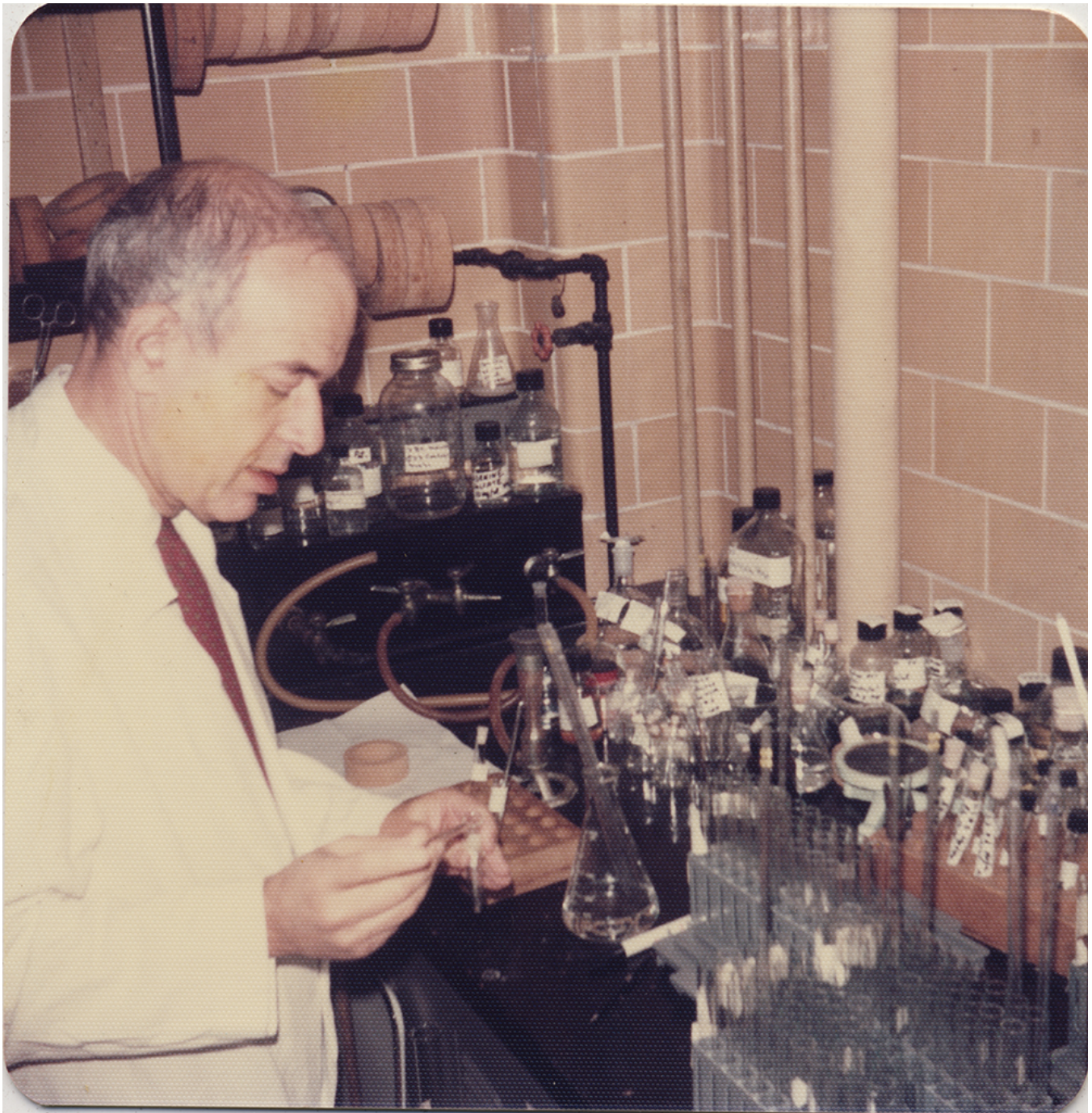
See Also: [News and Events](#)



[Dr Herbert Tabor Dies 1918-2020](#)

[Swan, Jeremy \(NIH/NICHD\) \[C\]](#) posted on Aug 25, 2020

## Dr. Herbert Tabor Dies at 101 Years Old



Courtesy of the Tabor Family

## Joint statement from Michael M. Gottesman, M.D., Deputy Director for Intramural Research, NIH and Griffin P. Rodgers, M.D., M.A.C.P., Director, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

We are sad to relay news of the passing of Herbert Tabor, M.D., the world's foremost authority on the enzymatic pathways of polyamines, as well as an esteemed editor of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* (JBC) for 40 years, and, until his death at age 101, a senior principal investigator in the NIDDK Laboratory of Biochemistry and Genetics, where he had served as lab chief until 1999.

Herb, along with his wife, Celia, also a physician scientist, who died in 2012, revealed the multitude of functions served by polyamines, organic compounds that interact with DNA, RNA, and proteins. The Tabors demonstrated that polyamines are required for growth of most organisms; protect against oxidative damage, elevated temperatures, and other environmental insults; and help maintain mitochondria and the fidelity of protein biosynthesis.

Herb died peacefully in his sleep at his home on the NIH campus on August 20, 2020. He was a consummate scientist to the very end, working remotely on research papers with NIH colleagues. Aside from leaving a profound scientific legacy, he was the last living voice of the NIH's formative years, having arrived in 1943 to the then recently created Bethesda campus.

Such a great loss for the NIH and broader scientific community of a warm, humble, insightful and imaginative man. Herb was truly loved and respected by everyone who worked with him, at the NIH and beyond.

Herb was born in New York City on November 28, 1918, coincidentally in the midst of a pandemic. He came of age during the Great Depression and attended local public schools. Showing a clear propensity for science, he received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University in biochemical science in 1937 and then M.D. from Harvard in 1941.

At Harvard, Herb was encouraged by his professors to pursue a career in biochemistry rather than clinical practice. During an internship at Yale–New Haven Hospital in 1942, however, Herb was exposed to both the clinical and biochemical worlds. This included the first major clinical trial for penicillin, which would prove crucial in saving the lives of soldiers fighting in what would soon be labeled World War II. Herb relayed the moment years later: "I was the intern at the time and performed the actual injection. The patient had a severe streptococcal septicemia with a persistently elevated temperature. Even though the dose of penicillin used was minimal by current standards, the therapeutic effect was dramatic, resulting in a rapid and permanent fall in temperature to normal."

In 1943, with the United States at war, Herb entered the U.S. Public Health Service and was assigned as the sole medical officer on the USCGC Duane, a Coast Guard cutter that sailed between the United States and England guarding convoys bringing supplies to the British Isles. After one battle at sea, when the Duane sank a German submarine and captured its crew, Herb provided medical care to rescued Allied sailors whose ship had just been sunk by the submarine as well as to captured German sailors. As that long year wound down, Herb was transferred to the NIH, working under the supervision of Sanford M. Rosenthal, M.D., chief of the Laboratory of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases. Together they studied electrolyte changes in burns and traumatic shock and determined how to treat such injury using saline instead of plasma, as plasma was in very short supply.

Mingled in this time was Herb's new relationship with Celia White, whom he had met in 1940 when a mutual acquaintance introduced them on a Boston streetcar. They were married in 1946 after Celia had finished her medical training; and they started working together at the NIH in 1952, collaborating on studies on various aspects of the biosynthesis and function of polyamines. Herb succeeded Rosenthal as lab chief in 1962. The Tabors were one of a few scientific couples working side by side at the NIH, as most universities had rules that prevented married couples from working together. The Tabors lived in commissioned officer housing on the NIH Bethesda campus and raised four children.

No summary of Herb's achievements is complete without mention of his role with the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* (JBC). Herb joined the JBC editorial board in 1961, became associate editor in 1968, and editor-in-chief in 1971, a position he held until 2010. Herb oversaw the journal's expansion from 1,000 to 4,500 published articles per year, and he was the moving force behind its transition to online publishing in 1995. He also created the Minireview Compendium, a yearly compilation of all short reviews published in the JBC. In 2011, in honor of Herb's scientific and editorial legacy, the JBC established the Herbert Tabor Young Investigator Awards to recognize early-career first authors of standout JBC papers for their creativity and scientific excellence. (Similarly, the Herbert Tabor Research Award from the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, ASBMB, established in 2004, honors senior investigators.)

Herb's honors are many. He received the Arthur S. Flemming Award in 1956; received the USPHS Meritorious Service Medal in 1970; was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1971; was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1977; received the Hillebrand Prize from the American Chemical Society in 1986; and received the William C. Rose Award (with Celia) from the ASBMB in 1994. In honor of his 100th birthday, Montgomery County proclaimed November 28, 2018, as Dr. Herbert Tabor Day.

Herb was the longest-serving NIH employee; its oldest principal investigator; and possibly, with 77.5 years under his belt, the longest-serving current federal employee at the time of his death.

The list of scientists whom Herb mentored is longer than his years of life. One of the many is Reed Wickner, who trained under Herb and succeeded him as chief of the Laboratory of Biochemistry and Genetics in 1999. "Herb taught me how to do science, and his devotion to science set a standard for me to aspire to," Reed said of his mentor. "His gentle sincerity combined with forthright critical thinking made him a leader throughout his career."

Herb is survived by four children —Edward, Marilyn, Richard, and Stanley — as well as 10 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

To learn more about Herb's life, we suggest the journal article "It All Started on a Streetcar in Boston" by Celia and Herb Tabor (<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev.biochem.68.1.1>) and also Herb's 2019 video–oral history by NIDDK and the Office of NIH History ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7wH\\_iOXkPQ&t](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7wH_iOXkPQ&t)).

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has limited the family's ability to hold memorial services. In lieu of flowers, donations are welcome in Herb's name to The Children's Inn at NIH. We will keep you informed about any NIH plans next year — in person, together again — to remember and salute Herb Tabor.





Hand Hygiene in Hospitals

Swan, Jeremy (NIH/NICHD) [C] posted on May 20, 2020

## Hand Hygiene in Hospitals

### The Revolution of hand-washing



CC News, July 2013, Michelle Holshue

*"One of the most remarkable developments of the last 50 years is the awakening of a sanitary conscience. It is a new thought to many men that the care of the body and cleanliness of surroundings are very considerable factors in the comfort, safety, and even the life and health of their fellow men."*

- —Surgeon General Hugh Cumming, 1928.

This image was featured in the [Clinical Center Newsletter from July 2013](#) (PDF).

Find the entire catalog of [NIH Clinical Center Newsletters](#), dating back until 1987.

### Images and Resources on the NIH History website



Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services, 1985

There are more posters and other images, available through the [Photographs page](#), including the following:

- [NIH Photo Galleries](#) - This page has links to photo galleries from the NIH Almanac. It includes the NIH image gallery with current photos from NIH's institutes and centers, Presidential images, photos of the NIH campus, and some historic photos.
- [Our Collection](#) - Search our database for photographs in our collection. Please note that most images we have are not yet included in this database. [Contact us](#) if you cannot find what you need.
- [Our Flickr](#) - We've arranged a selection of our images into albums on Flickr to make it easier to find, and download, them.
- [National Library of Medicine](#) - We have shared many images, pamphlets, and posters in the collection with the National Library of Medicine, but they have their own large collection of images too.

Also check out our [Posters Exhibit](#), which contains examples of bio-medical posters through the ages.

## Current Hand Hygiene Information Resources:

Information about Hand Hygiene in Healthcare settings: <https://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/>

Non-hospital handwashing information: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>





Image courtesy of Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

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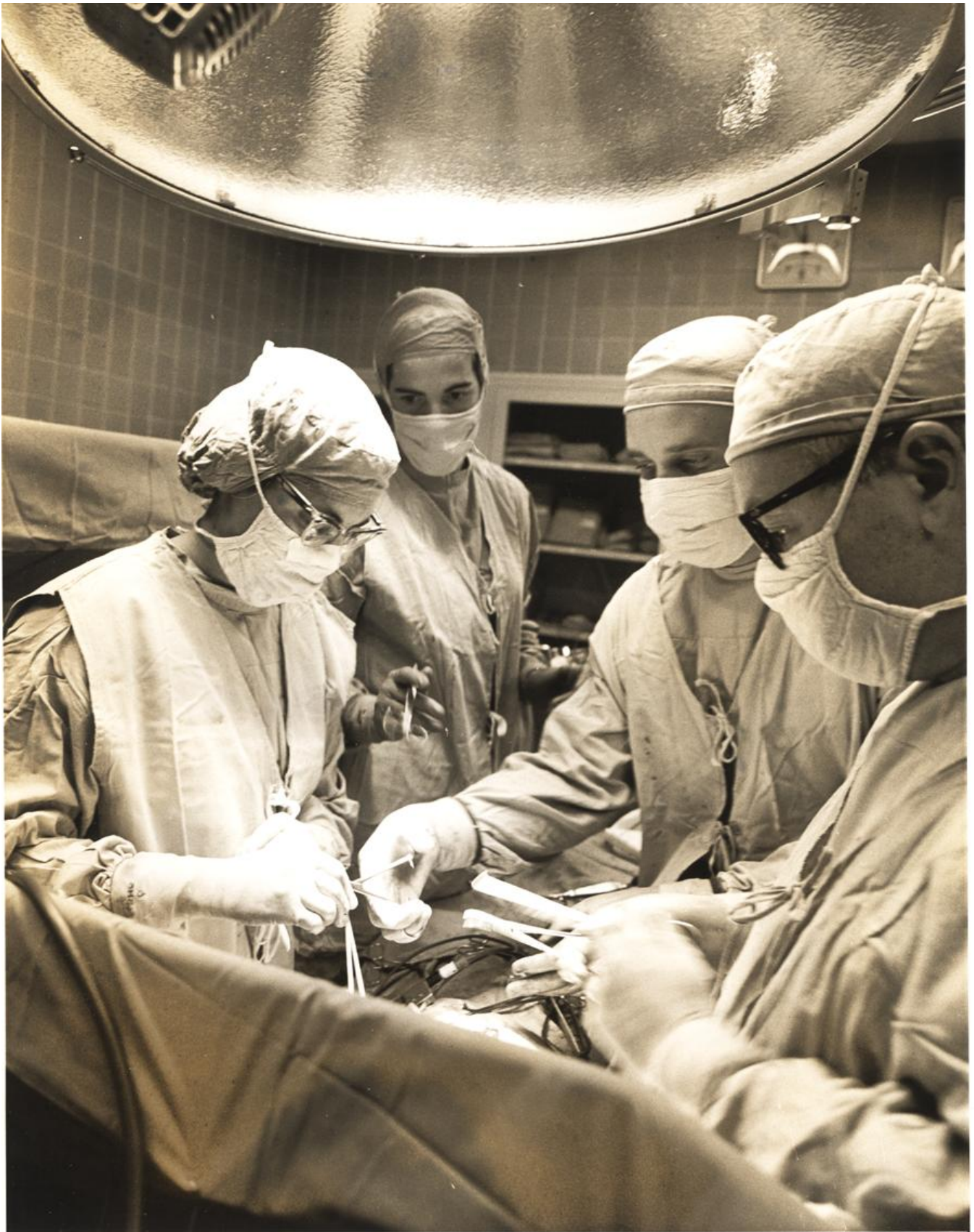


February is American Heart Month, and February 22nd is Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day.

Swan, Jeremy (NIH/NICHD) [C] posted on Feb 01, 2020

## February is American Heart Month, and February 22nd is Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day.

About 11 million Americans have heart valve disease, and millions of them need to have their valves replaced. The first successful replacement of a mitral heart valve was done at the NIH Clinical Center by Dr. Nina Braunwald in 1960, using a valve she had designed. This photo shows Braunwald, far left, and Dr. Andrew Morrow, far right, both from NHLBI, performing heart valve surgery in the early 1960s. February is American Heart Month, and February 22nd is Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day.







79th Anniversary of NIH Bethesda Campus Dedication

Lyons, Michele (NIH/OD) [E] posted on Oct 23, 2019

## 79th Anniversary of NIH Bethesda Campus Dedication



On October 31, 1940, President Franklin Roosevelt stood on the steps of Building 1 to dedicate the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland. While this photo of him is very nice, as well as amusing for the broom leaning against the pillar, it's even more impressive to see and hear the speech. Yes, it was filmed!

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Happy 132nd Birthday, NIH

Lyons, Michele (NIH/OD) [E] posted on May 26, 2019

## Happy 132nd Birthday, NIH!



We keep wishing ourselves happy birthday because as an agency with a long history, we've had a few name changes. But the true beginning of the NIH was in August 1887, when Dr. Joseph Kinyoun became the first and only employee of the new Laboratory of Hygiene of the U.S. Public Health Service (then the Marine Hospital Service). His laboratory was in the Marine Hospital on Staten Island, New York. Kinyoun helped to bring the new science of bacteriology to the service of protecting the public's health in the United States.





One of the most important events in NIH history happened on May 26, 1930: the Ransdell Act was signed, creating the National Institute of Health. #NIH was singular then, springing out of the Hygienic Laboratory of the Public Health Service. Louisiana Senator Joseph E. Ransdell, pictured here, worked tirelessly to get the bill passed. This legislation marked a change in the attitude of the U.S. scientific community toward public funding of medical research.

You can become an expert on Ransdell by reading "Inventing the NIH" by Dr. Victoria Harden <https://archive.org/details/inventingnihfede00hard/page/n5>

- [blog](#)



Womens History Month 2019

Lyons, Michele (NIH/OD) [E] posted on Mar 01, 2019

## Women's History Month 2019



## Anita B. Roberts

For Women's History month, we're introducing you to Dr. Anita B. Roberts (1942 – 2006), who was both a stellar scientist — she was among the top 50 most-cited researchers for 20 years — and a beloved mentor to dozens of young scientists.

Her pioneering work focused on the protein TGF- $\beta$ , which is critical in healing wounds and bone fractures and can either block or stimulate cancer development. Roberts joined #NCI in 1976, becoming the chief of the Laboratory of Cell Regulation and Carcinogenesis in 1995.

The Anita B. Roberts Lecture Series is organized by the #NIH Women Scientist Advisors Committee to highlight outstanding research achievements by female scientists @IRPatNIH. The series is supported by the Office of Research on Women's Health. Learn more about Roberts and the lecture series <https://bit.ly/2tqabmx> #WomensHistoryMonth

- [blog](#)